

WINDSOR, Conn. -- During Tropical Storm Irene and the recent severe storm of Oct.29-30 resulting in extended power outages, some Connecticut residents chose not to evacuate from their homes fearing they would be separated from their pets. The Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) emphasize that during emergency evacuations, leaving pets should be an absolute last resort and encourage owners of pets and livestock to learn about which shelters allow animals during emergencies.

“The likelihood that families and their animals will remain safe in an emergency tomorrow depends on disaster planning done today,” said FEMA Federal Coordinating Officer Stephen M. De Blasio Sr. “So, it’s critical to have an emergency plan in place that includes a fully-stocked animal emergency kit. In the long run it will help bring families some peace of mind as they begin the process of recovery.”

Planning for animal evacuation:

- If you must leave your residence, have a plan for your family pets;
- Go online and locate several "pet-friendly" hotels in and out of your area;
- Identify friends or relatives outside your area where you and your pets can stay;
- If there is a disaster pending, evacuate early with your pets, working animals and livestock; don't wait for a mandatory evacuation order; and
- Animals should have leg bands or tattoos, microchips or identification tags with their name as well as your address and phone number.

Putting together an animal emergency kit:

- Seven days worth of water and food stored with a can opener in a waterproof container;
- Toys, treats and bedding because familiar items may reduce stress for your pet;
- Medications, medical records and your veterinarian's name and telephone number;
- Current photos of you with your family pets;
- Sturdy leashes, harnesses, and/or carriers to move pets safely and securely;
- Litter, litter box, newspapers, paper towels, plastic trash bags and household chlorine bleach for sanitation; and
- First aid supplies such as cotton bandage rolls, tape, scissors, antibiotic ointment, flea/tick prevention, latex gloves, alcohol, saline solution as well as a pet first aid reference book.

Planning for safe animal transportation:

- Get family pets used to being placed in a carrier or crate;
- Prepare to move birds, snakes, lizards, ferrets and "pocket pets" like hamsters and gerbils in secure cages or carriers;
- Prepare for extreme weather conditions. Include blankets, ice packs, heating pads and a water mister in your kit; and
- Obtain "Pets Inside" stickers at www.ASPCA.org and place stickers on doors or windows with the number and types of pets in your home and a phone number where you can be reached. If time permits, remember to write "Evacuated with Pets" across the stickers if you flee with your pets.

Detailed plans for family pets, working animals and livestock owners are available online at www.Ready.Gov or by calling 1-800-BE READY (1-800-237-3239).

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